



**REGIONAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER**  
**South East Asia & the Pacific**  
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**Letter from the Regional President**

*Greetings to one and all,*

*Hope this newsletter finds everyone well. The ICSW SEAP team would like to wish you and your organisation members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. This will be the last newsletter for this year.*

*Much has happened since the Go-NGO forum in Bangkok. Social Protection Floor Initiative continues to be a focus for ICSW. Many regional groups have held capacity-building courses on SPFI for their members. Through consistent advocacy, many organizations in Indonesia working on disability issues are happy to see Indonesia ratifying the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In addition all countries have completed their first reporting through the Universal Periodic Review processes to the Human Rights Council. Often many of the suggestions made to the various countries by the Human Rights Council include development issues.*

*In recent months we read about the floods in Bangkok and recently the typhoon in Philippines. Just before Christmas we saw our friends in New Zealand cope with yet another earthquake. We express our heartfelt sympathies to families who have lost their loved ones, property and prized possessions. We wish all those affected much in hope and goodwill in the recovery process.*

*Next year, 2012 is a year to keep a lookout for the Social Work Social Development 2012: Action and Impact Conference to be held in Stockholm, Sweden. It will again be an arena to share and exchange views on social policies. 2012 will also see elections being held across the regions. ICSW SEAP will soon send out information on the process and we hope to form a three-member committee for the region.*

*This edition of the ICSW SEAP newsletter covers a range of topics from climate change to poverty with links to key social welfare indicators published for the Asia-Pacific region. Please also be updated on the upcoming conferences with regards to social welfare. We welcome any articles or latest development in social welfare from your respective countries*

and/or organisation for our next edition of the newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Wishing each of you and all in your organisation the best during this festive season and a great blast into 2012.

*Braema Mathiapparanam*  
*Regional President (SEAP)*

### **Durban Climate Change Conference – November/December 2011**

The United Nations Climate Change Conference, Durban 2011, delivered a breakthrough on the international community's response to climate change. In the second largest meeting of its kind, the negotiations advanced, in a balanced fashion, the implementation of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, the [Bali Action Plan](#), and the [Cancun Agreements](#). The outcomes included a decision by Parties to adopt a universal legal agreement on climate change as soon as possible, and no later than 2015. The President of COP17/CMP7 Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said: "What we have achieved in Durban will play a central role in saving tomorrow, today."

For conference documents, reports and statements by keynote speakers, please visit this [link](#).

### **The Human Right to safe drinking water and sanitation**

Having access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a basic human right, yet many are deprived of a life of dignity within our region. The rights to water and sanitation further require an explicit focus on the most disadvantaged and marginalized, as well as an emphasis on participation, empowerment, accountability and transparency. The United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has compiled a [factsheet](#) on the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. [Ms Catarina de Albuquerque](#), Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, has been appointed to examine the crucial issues and provide recommendations to Governments to the UN and other stakeholders. Read her replies to questions with regards to this fundamental right, posed at the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council in Annex A. For more information on this mandate, please click [here](#).

UN OCHCR also has a civil society unit aimed at fostering stronger cooperation with civil society organisations (CSO) and encourage engagement between CSOs and UN human rights mechanisms. To join or learn more about this network, please visit OCHCR [website](#) for more details.

### **New initiative to build upon Muslim concepts on gender equality**

[Musawah](#) is a new initiative by [Sisters in Islam](#) to document national statistics and women's life stories with regards to family law provisions, which often result in inequality in matters such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, financial security, right to divorce, custody and guardianship, choice and consent in marriage, inheritance and nationality laws. For more information, click [here](#) or [email](#) Musawah.

### **The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD)**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Consultation of ASEAN and Human Rights held between 27 to 29 November this year in Bali, Indonesia focused on the need for civil society to be involved in discussions on human rights within the region especially. This was timely given the drafting of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration took place during this time. The keynote speech was given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay. Her speech may be found [here](#). The joint statement by civil society representatives present at the regional consultation can be read [here](#). This statement covers a list of recommendations with regards to the AHRD meant for the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)

to consider, among other recommendations to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) for example.

The SAPA Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights submitted a position paper as part of its contribution to the AHRD for the consideration of the AICHR and the Drafting Group. This document was submitted to Indonesia Representative and current AICHR chair Rafendi Djamin on 28 July 2011. Click [here](#) to read more.

The Southeast Asian Women's Caucus also submitted a proposal to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). The network's [submission](#) was compiled over a period of months involving regional and national consultations since the inception of a drafting team for the AHRD. The group urges for ASEAN to align the AHRD to the standards of existing human rights mechanisms like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which is ratified by most ASEAN member states.

Additional information: To find out more about human rights mechanisms in ASEAN, please refer to free guidebook on engaging ASEAN and its Human Rights mechanisms produced by Forum-Asia. Click [here](#) to read more.

### **Publications on the region**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) commemorated World Poverty Day on 17<sup>th</sup> of October with the launch of their newest newsletter, [Poverty Matters](#). This newsletter features the developments in addressing the existing and widespread poverty within our region despite rapid economic growth. It touches on topics such as the environment of the poor with regards to climate change; poverty, labour markets and inclusive growth via statistical research; social protection; inclusive business and the social impact of the global recession.

The ADB has also launched a "**Poor Geodata Browser**" using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to show the spatial distribution of poverty in the Asia Pacific region. It has projections up till 2020. Visit the interactive map [here](#).

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[Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2011: Year-end Update "Steering Asia-Pacific Development Through Global Turbulence"](#) is another resourceful publication by UNESCAP. It covers the recent financial crisis in developing countries within the Asia-Pacific. It also postulates the outlook of 2012 and presents policy challenges and options in navigating and controlling inflation rates, capital flows and external pressures. The full text is available [here](#).

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The UNESCAP has also published important statistics such as the [2011 ESCAP Population Data Sheet](#) with key population and development indicators for countries and areas in the ESCAP region and sub-regions. For a more comprehensive review of statistics for Asia Pacific, UNESCAP has revised its [Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2011](#). This is the fourth edition of the revised Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific. It presents comparable, cross-sectoral statistical data and analyses on population, the environment, the state of the economy and connectivity for the Asia-Pacific region, including sub-regional, regional and global aggregates which help regional developments in a global context.

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### **Upcoming conferences**

- (1) The 2nd ADBI-OECD Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia: Managing Migration to Support Inclusive and Sustainable Growth, ADBI, Tokyo: 18 January 2012 - 20 January 2012**

This roundtable will be a follow-up to the inaugural ADBI/OECD roundtable, "Labor Migration in Asia: Recent Trends and Prospects in the Postcrisis Context", which was held at the ADBI in Tokyo from 18 to 20 January 2011. This event attracted more than 60 participants

including policy makers responsible for migration policy and representatives of economic planning ministries from developing Asia, policy makers from some OECD countries, and migration specialists from the ADB, the International Organization for Migration and the International Labor Organization. Issues covered included: trends in labor migration in 2009-10; migration policies in the postcrisis context; migrants' remittances; highly skilled migration and the globalization of higher education: international mobility of health workers in Asia; and public opinion and migration. Email details [here](#).

- (2) **Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Assessment of Progress against Commitments in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals , 6-8 February 2012, Bangkok**
- (3) **Social Work Social Development 2012: Action and Impact, 8-12 July 2012, Stockholm Sweden**

The deadline for abstract submission has been extended to **January 2, 2012**. The organising team is looking for more contributions on all sub-themes, especially regarding LGBT-rights, Spiritual rights and religious beliefs, Social action for clean water and Social media. These subthemes are considered highly vital in our world today and innovative for the conference. For more details, please visit the conference [website](#).

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As always, we are keen to hear from our readers and welcome contributions. Best wishes, Braema Mathiapparanam, President, South East Asia & Pacific Region and Dilpreet Kaur, [dkaur@icsw.org](mailto:dkaur@icsw.org), Programme Officer, South East Asia & Pacific. Website: [www.icsw.org](http://www.icsw.org)

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Please distribute this newsletter as widely as possible.

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**Civil Society Section**

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Special Rapporteur on the right to access to safe drinking water and sanitation**

**Written responses to questions - 18th Session of the Human Rights Council**

Dear All,

Please see below the text of correspondence by Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque, Special Rapporteur on rights to water and sanitation, concerning answers to questions posed during the 18th Session of the Human Rights Council:

"I would like to thank all delegations and other stakeholders who participated in the interactive dialogue that followed the presentation of my five reports during the 18th session of the Human Rights Council (the main thematic report on national planning, the good practices compilation, and three mission reports to Slovenia, Japan and the United States of America).

In the course of this discussion, many interesting points were raised. I regret that there was not sufficient time to respond to these questions. As indicated in my concluding statement, I present herewith a succinct note addressing those issues. Once again, I would like to extend my appreciation to all Governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations and others who have supported my mandate through this important dialogue, as well as throughout the year.

1. Concerning the question on how to tackle disparities between rural and urban areas, States must make efforts to change their current behaviour in focussing predominantly on urban areas. While it is true that urban areas are easier to reach, States' primary obligation is to realise the human rights to water and sanitation, prioritising the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and communities, which are mostly in rural areas or in deprived urban areas. They have moreover to ensure respect for the principles of non- discrimination and equality. Taking into account the evidence that the majority of resources are benefiting the relatively well-off rather than low-income communities, who lack even basic access, States must integrate human rights based approach into national and local plans on water and sanitation. This will particularly require that States target their plans and financing on ensuring access to basic services in rural areas and in deprived urban areas. In this context I would like to commend the Council for the adoption of Resolution A/HRC/18/L.1 which calls on States, inter alia, to ensure that national minimum standards, based on human rights criteria, are in place when water and sanitation services are decentralized, in order to ensure coherence and countrywide compliance with human rights. The resolution also calls on States to set access targets to be reached in short-time periods for universal service provision, giving priority to realizing a basic level of service for everyone before improving service levels for those already served.

2. Several States mentioned the problem of climate change and its possible negative impact on the realisation of the rights to water and sanitation. While climate change is already affecting people's lives, I would like to point out that the human rights to water and sanitation only include personal and domestic uses (drinking, personal sanitation, washing of clothes, food preparation, personal and household hygiene), which requires comparatively little water, for instance when compared to agriculture or industry. Water availability is generally not as low as to hinder the realisation of these rights; it is rather - and this is what I constantly see, namely in my country missions - a question of prioritization between various uses. Human rights require the prioritization of water for basic personal and

domestic uses before other uses, and this is particularly relevant in cases where water availability is low. At the same time, lack of access to water and sanitation also remains a challenge in countries where the availability of water resources is high, confirming my previous statement that challenges in the provision of water and sanitation services are not primarily a question of the availability of natural resources, but more often a question of accessibility i.e. making sure that water is within safe physical reach and affordable for all sections of the population. Climate change may bring particular concerns where it causes extreme weather that may demand emergency responses, such as flooding or draughts. The rights to water and sanitation are already being incorporated into emergency planning, and I encourage this approach.

3. With regards to the question of how States must ensure implementation and monitoring of national plans, a mapping exercise to assess current levels of access is essential in order to identify groups who may be excluded, gaps in monitoring and responsible institutions. Plans must set ambitious but realistic targets, so target setting must take into consideration the available resources. Interim benchmarks will assist a State to know whether it is meeting its obligation to progressively realize the rights to water and sanitation. The plan must then lay out implementation measures for reaching the targets. A first crucial step would be to anchor the action plan in a strong national legal framework.

Development partners and agencies must also make efforts to ensure successful planning by, inter alia, facilitating coordination and supporting capacity-building and institution strengthening, including at the local level. These measures will help institutions to fulfil their responsibility and to be accountable to the population. Donors must also incorporate a human rights approach into their policies on water and sanitation.

4. Several delegations asked for some specific examples of national measurements and indicators that take into account human rights criteria and principles. This is an issue that I am considering with some urgency, and I am engaging with bodies such as the WHO / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation to explore how the rights to water and sanitation can best be monitored (see below). States must pay particular attention to measuring affordability, water quality, accessibility, and non-discrimination, to meet human rights standards. With regards to affordability, States must, among other measures, design a tariff structure that considers the needs of all people, including those in poverty; designate an institution responsible for setting tariffs, regulating service providers and monitoring affordability; adopt supplementary social policies if necessary; consider operation and maintenance as well as connection costs in the case of networked supply, but also individual contributions for other forms of services; and set standards and safeguards for disconnections due to non-payment. And with regards to accessibility and water quality, States should develop indicators that can measure the time spent in collecting water, water quality and treatment of wastewater. Such indicators should be designed not only to measure the outcome in terms of access, but also to capture the progress made and Government efforts. Data must be disaggregated according to prohibited grounds of discrimination to capture whether the specific targets for marginalized and vulnerable populations have been reached.

5. Responding to the request on recommendations in the areas of sustainability of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, I would like to underline areas in which States should focus on. Firstly, States must consider operation and maintenance of services and the institutional and managerial structure, including regulation. Secondly, strategies and plans must be developed through a participatory and inclusive process ensuring, in particular, that disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable people and communities are represented. Participation must go beyond mere information sharing and superficial consultation, and provide real opportunities for influence throughout the planning process. Thirdly, governments must ensure transparency throughout the planning process, making relevant information, including on existing policies and measures and expert advice on available technical options, as well as drafts of the plan, publicly available in all relevant languages via multiple channels to ensure accessibility.

6. Regarding the question on the compilation of good practices and how to utilize it in the elaboration of national plans and in the integration of a human rights perspective, I would like to highlight that the Compendium of Good Practices demonstrates how States and other key stakeholders can play an important role in the implementation of the rights to water and sanitation by working together. Good examples are referred into the compendium, inter alia, in 2010 "Sanitation and Water for all", a partnership created in 2010 by developing countries, donors, multilateral agencies and civil society, focused on increasing political prioritization for sustainable and drinking water, in particular the mutual accountability of Governments and development partners; or the 2008 Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council initiative, the Global Sanitation Fund created during the International Year of Sanitation, encouraging donors to make multi-year commitments to facilitate long-term financial planning. The Fund has already instrumental in developing good collaborative practice between Government and civil society in Madagascar, Senegal and Nepal.

Taking into account the diverse types of good practices contained in the compendium, States and all stakeholders involved can observe how much change can be gained using the rights to water and sanitation framework, changing their approach to their work and focusing on the most neglected, excluded and forgotten persons, therefore, reducing significantly the number of people who do not have access to water and sanitation.

While more work and study is needed, I would like to point out that the Compendium on Good Practices clearly shows that it is possible to implement human rights even in seemingly difficult circumstances, such as in remote areas, slums or in emergency situations. The application of human rights principles and standards defined by the rights to water and sanitation can lead to greater levels of safe, acceptable and affordable water and sanitation in sufficient quantities.

In addition to that, I would like to inform you that I will continue exchanging ideas and practices. Next year in March, I will present a book on good practices hopefully at the forthcoming World Water Forum, that it will take place in Marseille. I believe that this will be a great scenario for the presentation of this book as I will have opportunity to share it with all stakeholders involved in the water and sanitation sector. Efforts are needed and must be coordinated. I have high expectations for the World Water Forum.

7. Extraordinary developments have been taken into place in the last three years regarding the recognition of the rights to water and sanitation, the main goal now is the implementation of these two rights. In order to do so, all actors involved in the sector of water and sanitation, but also human rights specialists, must work closely. I would like to highlight the efforts that have been taken through the Joint Monitoring Programme, also called the JMP, run by UNICEF and WHO as the main mechanism for measuring progress towards the MDG targets on water and sanitation. JMP is currently exploring how to incorporate human rights criteria into its monitoring efforts and I warmly welcome these developments. These discussions are also aiming at influencing the design of new goals and targets for the post 2015 development agenda. Furthermore, I offered to preside over a task force on non-discrimination and equality that has been created in order to give advice on how to incorporate these principles into the new possible indicators. I would like to underline that the principles of non-discrimination and equality have concrete legal implications, and States can be held accountable for delivering services that are discriminatory, or for providing resources in a way that prioritises those who already have access over those who do not. Without this specific focus, interventions in water and sanitation tend to improve access only or primarily for those who are relatively easy to reach, and risk reinforcing existing inequalities.

8. Advancing the mandate's work plan, I would like to note that efforts will continue focused on the implementation of the rights to water and sanitation, in particular in identifying gaps and obstacles as well as continuing to share good practices. The debate on how human rights in general, and the human rights to water and sanitation, in particular, can contribute

to the achievement of the MDGs and post 2015 development agenda will be a priority. Further study will be focussed on groups of people that face discrimination for different reasons, with a particular focus on those who are stigmatised, in order to find solutions on how to overcome this situation and give advice on how States must ensure realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination.

I look forward to continuing the work under my mandate to achieve the full realisation of the rights to water and sanitation and hope to make a contribution to that with my on-going work."

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For an unofficial translation into another language you may try: <http://translate.google.com/>

Best regards,

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